

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 787
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

The Harlot's House and Other Poems

Oscar Wilde

Edited, with an Introduction, by
George Sylvester Viereck

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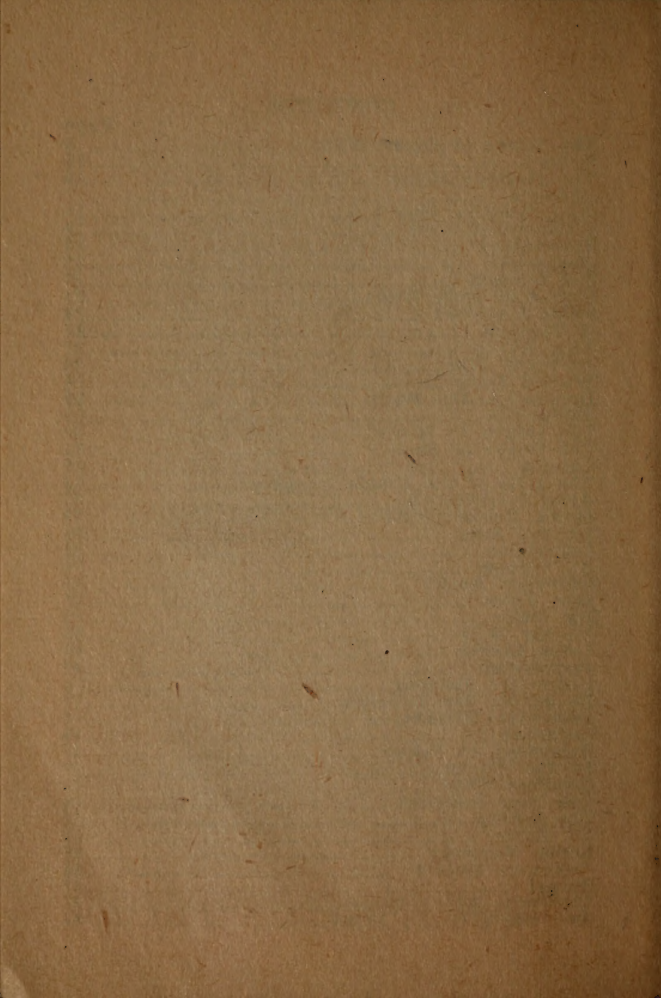
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THE SECRET OF OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde was born in 1852 or 1854. There seems to be some doubt as to the year of his birth. He died in 1900. Wilde was sentenced to prison in 1895; to immortality, hardly three decades later. For, before the first quarter of the twentieth century was rounded out, sober American critics acclaimed him as "the youngest of the classics." They could not salute him as "the oldest of the moderns." He belongs to the past by temperament as well as by tradition.

Compared with Browning and Hardy, Wilde is distinctly old-fashioned. He graduates from an older school of thought that took its philosophy and its morality ready-made. In his heart of hearts, he believed in the old moralities. Oscar Wilde, stripped of pretence and paradox, was a moralist. That is his tragedy and his secret.

Glittering paradoxes fail to conceal the conscience of Oscar Wilde, writhing in the conflict between accepted standards of morality and the forbidden things in his nature. An eager desire to justify himself is responsible for his excursions into so many fields of art. He experiments with the essay, with poetry, with romance, with comedy and with tragedy, obsessed by the longing to prove himself a—man.

His inferiority complex, evolved from the consciousness of his own bi-sexuality and unrelieved by any clear understanding of its

biological basis, compelled him to exert himself in letters and in life. It made him the most brilliant conversationalist, the most sparkling epigrammatist, of his period. It is the source of his impudence and of his genius.

Oscar Wilde's conceit is a mask to conceal his weakness. His paradoxes are an oblique compliment to the established order. When that order falls, their edge will be dulled. They will be almost incomprehensible. The man who attacks a law is still its slave, as much as the man who defends it. The nimble-witted Chesterton comprehends the truth of this assertion. In "The Ball and the Cross," the orthodox Catholic and the devout atheist are eager to fight a duel over the existence or non-existence of God. They are the only men in all London who take their religion seriously enough to stake their lives on their convictions!

Wilde, it may be urged, preached that art was essentially "unmoral." Nevertheless, his very preachments belie his faith. The man who turns a truth or a truism upside down merely renders homage to its validity. The man who shouts his virtue from the housetops is certain to be a rake. The poet who, after reaching maturity, constantly toys with sin, who boldly announces that he is a very wicked man, is a moralist in disguise.

Scratch the Aesthete, and you will find the moralist. Oscar Wilde, both in his works and in his life, exemplifies a Puritan conscience which he wants to conceal from the world and from himself. He protests too much. His

protestations at no time convince us because he has not smothered his conscience.

"Dorian Gray" is the story of a conscience. When the hero stabs his conscience he dies. Wilde, with uncanny premonition, foretold his own doom. When, after his release from prison, some fatal discovery (perhaps a knowledge of the new psychology, conveyed to him by friends from the laboratory of German science or from the researches of Havelock Ellis), destroyed his consciousness of sin, he perished as an artist. The Scarlet Letter ceased to be a distinction. Sin had ceased to be splendid and scarlet; it was sin no longer.

In "De Profundis" Wilde, repentant, is still capable of the delusion of his own sinfulness. His repentance is sincere. He needs the penitential mood for his creative purpose. When this penitential mood and the consciousness of sin disappear together, the well of his creative imagination runs dry.

In his plays, despite parlor chatter, there is no attempt to uproot old conventions. Wilde prides himself on being a gentleman; accepting the standards of his generation. He is no rebel like Ibsen; no minter of a new moral coinage.

"Salome" is pervaded by the consciousness of sin. "Salome", as well as his poem, "The Sphinx", depicts the desires, against which the poet battles vainly, in his own bosom. The soldiers who smother under their shields, Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judea, execute the verdict of the poet's own outraged

moral sense. "The Sphinx" rings out with an invocation to the Crucifix—

Whose pallid burden, sick with pain, watches the
world with wearied eyes,
And weeps for every soul that dies, and weeps for
every soul in vain.

"The Sphinx", probably Wilde's greatest lyrical effort, his finest accomplishment as a poet (with the exception of "The Ballad of Reading Gaol") is the symbol of lust. Poe's "ungainly fowl" and Wilde's "curious cat are foils. What melancholy was to Poe, the consciousness of sin was to Wilde. Both moods are mysteriously rooted in sex. The psychological reaction involved made both men immortal after death and doomed both to mortal agony in the flesh.

Poe confesses somewhere:

I could not love except where Death
Was mingling his with Beauty's breath—
Or Hymen, Time, and Destiny
Were stalking between her and me.

Wilde, like Poe, could neither love nor create, except when he was spurred by a sense of the forbidden. If he could not be a saint, he would at least be a magnificent sinner. His "splendid, scarlet sins" helped him to overcome a feeling of constitutional inferiority.

To us, Wilde does not seem a sinner, but an individual with a paradoxal sexual constitution, fairly common in all climes and races of men. Biologically man is a bi-sexual animal.

Like Swinburne and Gautier, Wilde is fascinated by "loves double blossomed", but, in spite of his pose of brazen effrontery, this "king of

life," this "lord of language," lacks the splendid impudence of his masters in the treatment of passiona~~l~~ themes. Passion in Wilde is never unashamed. Not in his verse, not in his prose. We shall not cite here his cautious denials on the witness stand, for there, caught in the trap of an antiquated and hypocritical law, his sole business was to disentangle his feet ensnared by the cunning of his foes and the imprudence of his friends.

In the soul of Oscar Wilde (a result perhaps of psychic shocks suffered in childhood) physical passion was never divorced from infantile taboos. Even in the "Sphinx" where his language is boldest and where, for once, he speaks in the first person singular, his Muse does not bravely face the sensual phantasmagoria of his subconscious mind, but squints at them lascivously through her fingers.

In most cases he conceals his propensities under the ambiguous cloak of pedantic allegory, religious contrition and classical learning. Psychic exhibitionism, which is perhaps the ultimate spring of all artistic creation, constantly battles in him with a profoundly British sense of propriety.

When, in "De Profundis," he says that the perverse became to him in the sphere of passion what the paradox was to him in the sphere of the intellect, he is still playing with terms, without real insight into the basic quality of his nature.

The public proclamation of his idiosyncrasy at the trial and his own confession in "De Profundis," must have been an immense

psychic relief, but he either was no longer able to rebuild his defences against his own sense of inferiority upon which his creative instinct so largely depended, or he was robbed of his sense of shame that delectable consciousness of sin, without which his Muse was sterile.

Unable to glory in flesh without a stab of conscience Wilde was neither a Pagan nor a Greek. He was an Irishman molded by the atmosphere of Nineteenth Century England. He would have been utterly out of place in the Athens of Alcibiades. He could, not like Whitman, sing the body electric.

The Sphinx, call it consciousness of sin, call it lust or taboo, like the Raven that haunted Poe, hovers forever in the nethermind of the poet. Its shadow never leaves him. At last emasculation seems the only escape.

What snake-tressed fury fresh from Hell, with uncouth gestures and unclean,
Stole from the poppy-drowsy queen and led you to a student's cell?

What songless tongueless ghost of sin crept through the curtains of the night,
And saw my taper burning bright, and knocked, and bade you enter in.

Are there not others more accursed, whiter with leprosy than I?
Are Abana and Pharpar dry that you come here to slake your thirst?

Get hence, you loathsome mystery! Hideous animal, get hence!

You wake in me each bestial sense, you make me what I would not be.

You make my creed a barren sham, you wake foul dreams of sensual life,
And Atys with his blood-stained knife were better than the thing I am.

No Greek could have written "The Harlot's House." Walt Whitman could not have written it. Through the mincing music of the poet's lines, we hear the agony of his twisted soul:

Sometimes a horrible marionette
Came out, and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then, turning to my love, I said,
"The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust."

But she—she heard the violin,
And left my side, and entered in:
Love passed into the house of lust.

There is always in Wilde a sense of loss and futile regret. The sonnet, "Helas," which he prefixes to his poems, is his creed and confession.

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?

Never has Wilde stated his own case more clearly and more poetically than in the tell-tale lines:

lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

The same note appears in "Bitter Sweet Love".

Had my lips been smitten into music by the kisses
that but made them bleed,
You had walked with Bice and the angels on the
verdant and enamelled mead.

I had trod the road which Dante treading saw the
suns of seven circles shine,

Ay! perchance had seen the heavens opening, as
they opened to the Florentine.

I have made my choice, have lived my poems, and,
though youth is gone in wasted days,

I have found the lover's crown of myrtle better
than the poet's crown of bays.

But he is not convincing. The choice we feel
is not final. The poet whistles to keep up his
courage:

But surely it is something to have been

The best beloved for a little while,

To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen
His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay! though the gorged asp of passion feed

On my boy's heart, yet have I burst the bars,

Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed

The Love which moves the Sun and all the stars!

He calls the poem "Apologia." Poor Oscar
always apologizes! Swinburne, Catullus, Sappho,
never apologize.

Ah! had'st thou liked me less and loved me more,

Through all those summer days of joy and rain,

I had not now been sorrow's heritor,

Or stood a lackey in the House of Pain.

But the poet is sorrow's heritor. He *stands*
in the House of Pain, luxuriating both in his
sin and in his sorrow. In "Taedium Vitae," he
protests against the hoarse cave of strife" where
his white soul first kissed the mouth of sin, but
it is only sin that makes him articulate. Even
the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" is inspired by a
murderer who killed the thing he loved:

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,

By each let this be heard. . . .

Gruesomely the poet identifies himself with the young soldier, condemned to the halter:

A prison wall was round us both,
Two outcast men we were:
The world had thrust us from its heart,
And God from out His care:
And the iron gin that waits for Sin
Had caught us in its snare.

Could any one paraphrase more beautifully the old saw that the wages of sin is death?

"Oho!" they cried, "The world is wide,
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the Secret House of Shame."

Can morality be more insistent?

Other poets with a bi-sexual complex have been candid enough. Shakespeare makes no secret of his devotion to Mr. W. H., the youth whose blonde slimness pervades the Sonnets. Michael Angelo was not afraid to proclaim his Hellenic affection. Douglas wrote "Two Loves" and his "Hymn to Physical Beauty". Wilde refers only surreptitiously to that which moves him most; usually in connection with some classical allusion. In "Dorian Gray," he feeds us on innuendo. Only once, in "The Portrait of Mr. W. H.," does he frankly approach the problem.

We must search for an obscure passage in one of his longer poems, "The Burden of Itys," to find Wilde's description of the secret of his own dual nature in his poetic characterization of Salmacis—

Who is not boy or girl and yet is both,
Fed by two fires and unsatisfied,
Through their excess, each passion being loth
For love's own sake to leave the other's side
Yet killing love by staying. . . .

Wilde's sense of sin explains his religious moods.

Great Pan is dead, and Mary's son is king.

Wilde accepts Mary's son. Pan would make him free from the sense of sin. He prefers salvation by way of Calvary. The fates granted his wish. If, however, in his singing days, Pan had purged his soul and cleansed his flesh, or if Jesus had come down from heaven with the divine assurances of forgiveness, song would have perished on his lyre, paradox paled on his lips.

The duality of his sexual constitution, wedded to a consciousness of sin, for better or for worse, made Wilde a poet. His genius was a compensation for his sense of inferiority. To justify himself, he appreciably enriched both the prose and the verse of his time. It is useless to speculate upon what he would have been without a consciousness of sin and without an inferiority complex. A commonplace Irishman, perhaps, chasing social butterflies in London; or the supreme poet of his generation!

GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK.

Note—To understand "The Harlot's House and Other Poems," this volume should be read in conjunction with "Panthea and Other Poems", with the "Ballad of Reading Gaol", with "Oscar Wilde in Outline" and with "The Tragic Story of Oscar Wilde." All these books appear in the Little Blue Books.)

HELAS

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of
God:

Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

THE HARLOT'S HOUSE

We caught the tread of dancing feet
We loitered down the moonlit street,
And stopped beneath the harlot's house.

Inside, above the din and fray,
We heard the loud musicians play
The "Treues Liebes Herz" of Strauss.

Like strange mechanical grotesques,
Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin
To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled automatons,
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sidling through the slow quadrille.

They took each other by the hand,
And danced a stately saraband;
Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clockwork puppet pressed
A phantom lover to her breast
Sometimes they seemed to try to sing.

Sometimes a horrible marionette
Came out, and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.

Then, turning to my love, I said,
"The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust."

But she—she heard the violin,
And left my side, and entered in:
Love passed into the house of lust.

Then suddenly the tune went false,
The dancers wearied of the waltz,
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl.

And down the long and silent street,
The dawn, with silver-sandalled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

APOLOGIA

Is it thy will that I should wax and wane,
Barter my cloth of gold for hodden grey,
And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain
Whose brightest threads are each a wasted
day?

Is it thy will—Love that I love so well—
That my Soul's House should be a torture
spot
Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell
The quenchless flame, the worm that dieth
not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure,
And sell ambition at the common mart,
And let dull failure be my vestiture,
And sorrow dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so—at least

I have not made my heart a heart of stone,
Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast,
Nor walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

Many a man hath done so; sought to fence

In straitened bonds the soul that should be free,

Trodden the dusty road of common sense,
While all the forest sang of liberty.

Not marking how the spotted hawk in flight

Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air,
To where some steep untrodden mountain height

Caught the last tresses of the Sun-God's hair.

Or how the little flower he trod upon,

The daisy, that white-feathered shield of gold,
Followed with wistful eyes the wandering sun
Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been

The best beloved for a little while,
To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen

His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ay, though the gorged asp of passion feed

On my boy's heart, yet have I burst the bars,
Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed
The Love which moves the Sun and all the stars!

QUIA MULTUM AMAVI

Dear Heart I think the young impassioned
priest

When first he takes from out the hidden
shrine

His God imprisoned in the Eucharist,
And eats the bread, and drinks the dreadful
wine,

Feels not such awful wonder as I felt
When first my smitten eyes beat full on thee,
And all night long before thy feet I knelt
Till thou wert wearied of Idolatry.

Ah! had'st thou liked me less and loved me
more,

Through all those summer days of joy and
rain,

I had not now been sorrow's heritor,
Or stood a lackey in the House of Pain.

Yet, though remorse, youth's white-faced
seneschal,

Tread on my heels with all his retinue,

I am most glad I loved thee—think of all
The suns that go to make one speedwell blue!

BITTER SWEET LOVE

Sweet, I blame you not for mine the fault was,
had I not been made of common clay
I had climbed the higher heights unclimbed yet,
seen the fuller air, the larger day.

From the wildness of my wasted passion I had
struck a better, clearer song,
Lit some lighter light of freer freedom, battled
with some Hydra-headed wrong.

Had my lips been smitten into music by the
kisses that but made them bleed,
You had walked with Bice and the angels on
that verdant and enamelled mead.

I had trod the road which Dante treading saw
the suns of seven circles shine,
Ah! perchance had seen the heavens opening,
as they opened to the Florentine.

And the mighty nations would have crowned
me, who am crownless now and without
name,

And some orient dawn had found me kneeling
on the threshold of the House of Fame.

I had sat within that marble circle where the
oldest bard is as the young,

And the pipe is ever dropping honey, and the
lyre's strings are ever strung.

Keats had lifted up his hymenæal curls from
out the poppy-seeded wine,

With ambrosial mouth had kissed my forehead,
clasped the hand of noble love in mine.

And at spring tide, when the apple-blossoms
brush the burnished bosom of the dove,

Two young lovers lying in an orchard would
have read the story of our love.

Would have read the legend of my passion,
known the bitter secret of my heart.
Kissed as we have kissed, but never parted as
we two are fated now to part.

For the crimson flower of our life is eaten by
the canker-worm of truth,
And no hand can gather up the fallen withered
petals of the rose of youth.

Yet I am not sorry that I loved you—ah! what
else had I a boy to do,—
For the hungry teeth of time devour, and the
silent-footed years pursue.

Rudderless, we drift athwart a tempest, and
when once the storm of youth is past,
Without lyre, without lute or chorus, Death
the silent pilot comes at last.

And within the grave there is no pleasure, for
the blind-worm battens on the root,
And Desire shudders into ashes, and the tree of
Passion bears no fruit.

Ah! what else had I to do but love you, God's
own mother was less dear to me,
And less dear the Cytheræan rising like an
argent lily from the sea.

I have made my choice, have lived my poems,
and, though youth is gone in wasted days,
I have found the lover's crown of myrtle better
than the poet's crown of bays.

THEORETIKOS

This mighty empire hath but feet of clay:
Of all its ancient chivalry and might
Our little island is forsaken quite:
Some enemy hath stolen its crown of bay,
And from its hills that voice hath passed away
Which spake of Freedom: O come out of it,
Come out of it, my Soul, thou art not fit
For this vile traffic-house, where day by day
Wisdom and reverence are sold at mart,
And the rude people rage with ignorant cries
Against an heritage of centuries.
It mars my calm: wherefore in dreams of
Art
And loftiest culture I would stand apart,
Neither for God, nor for his enemies.

REQUIESCAT

Tread lightly, she is near
Under the snow,
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,
She hardly knew
She was a woman, so
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast,
I vex my heart alone,
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet,
All my life's buried here,
Heap earth upon it.

Avignon.

SAN MINIATO

See, I have climbed the mountain side
Up to this holy house of God,
Where once that Angel-Painter trod
Who saw the heavens opened wide,

And throned upon the crescent moon
The Virginal white Queen of Grace,—
Mary! could I but see thy face
Death could not come at all too soon.

O crowned by God with thorns and pain!
Mother of Christ! O mystic wife!
My heart is weary of this life
And over-sad to sing again.

O crowned by God with love and flame!
O crowned by Christ the Holy one!
O listen ere the searching sun
Show to the world my sin and shame.

SONNET ON HOLY WEEK

I wandered through Scoglietto's far retreat
The oranges on each o'erhanging spray
Burned as bright lamps of gold to shame the
day,
Some startled bird with fluttering wings and
fleet
Made snow of all the blossoms, at my feet
Like silver moons the pale narcissi lay:
And the curved waves that streaked the
great green bay
Laughed i' the sun, and life seemed very sweet.
Outside the young boy-priest passed singing
clear,
"Jesus the Son of Mary has been slain,
O come and fill his sepulchre with flowers."
Ah, God! Ah, God! those dear Hellenic hours
Had drowned all memory of Thy bitter pain,
The Cross, the Crown, the Soldiers, and the
Spear.

ROME UNVISITED

I

The corn has turned from grey to red,
Since first my spirit wandered forth
From the drear cities of the north,
And to Italia's mountains fled.

And here I set my face towards home,
For all my pilgrimage is done,
Although, methinks, yon blood-red sun
Marshals the way to Holy Rome.

O Blessed Lady, who dost hold
Upon the seven hills thy reign!
O Mother without blot or stain,
Crowned with bright crowns of triple gold!

O Roma, Roma, at thy feet
I lay this barren gift of song!
For, ah! the way is steep and long
That leads unto thy sacred street.

II

And yet what joy it were for me
To turn my feet unto the south,
And journeying towards the Tiber mouth
To kneel again at Fiesole!

And wandering through the tangled pines
That break the gold of Arno's stream,
To see the purple mist and gleam
Of morning on the Apennines.

By many a vineyard-hidden home,
Orchard, and olive-garden grey,
Till from the drear Campagna's way
The seven hills bear up the dome!

III

A pilgrim from the northern seas—
What joy for me to seek alone
The wondrous Temple, and the throne
Of Him who holds the awful keys!

When, bright with purple and with gold,
Come priest and holy Cardinal,
And borne above the heads of all
The gentle Shepherd of the Fold.

O joy to see before I die
The only God-anointed King,
And hear the silver trumpets ring
A triumph as He passes by!

Or at the brazen-pillared shrine
Holds high the mystic sacrifice,
And shows his God to human eyes
Beneath the veil of bread and wine.

IV

For lo, what changes time can bring!
The cycles of revolving years
May free my heart from all its fears,
And teach my lips a song to sing.

Before yon field of trembling gold
Is garnered into dusty sheaves,
Or ere the autumn's scarlet leaves
Flutter as birds adown the wold,

I may have run the glorious race,
And caught the torch while yet aflame,
And called upon the holy name
Of Him who now doth hide His face.

Arona.

E TENEBRIS

Come down, O Christ, and help me! reach thy
hand,

For I am drowning in a stormier sea

Than Simon on thy lake of Galilee:

The wine of life is spilt upon the sand,

My heart is as some famine-murdered land

Whence all good things have perished utterly,

And well I know my soul in Hell must lie

If I this night before God's throne should
stand.

"He sleeps perchance, or rideth to the chase,

Like Baal, when his prophets howled that
name

From morn till noon on Carmel's smitten
height."

Nay, peace, I shall behold before the night,

The feet of brass, the robe more white than
flame,

The wounded hands, the weary human face.

VITA NUOVA

I stood by the unvintageable sea

Till the wet waves drenched face and hair
with spray,

The long red fires of the dying day

Burned in the west; the wind piped drearily;

And to the land the clamorous gulls did flee:

"Alas!" I cried, "my life is full of pain,

And who can garner fruit or golden grain,

From these waste fields which travail cease-
lessly!"

My nets gaped wide with many a break and
flaw

Nathless I threw them as my final cast
Into the sea, and waited for the end.

When lo! a sudden glory! and I saw
From the black waters of my tortured past
The argent splendour of white limbs ascend!

MADONNA MIA

A Lily-Girl, not made for this world's pain,
With brown, soft hair close braided by her ears,
And longing eyes half veiled by slumberous
tears

Like bluest water seen through mists of rain:
Pale cheeks whereon no love hath left its
stain,

Red underlip drawn in for fear of love,
And white throat, whiter than the silvered
dove,

Through whose wan marble creeps one purple
vein.

Yet, though my lips shall praise her without
cease,

Even to kiss her feet I am not bold,
Being o'ershadowed by the wings of awe,
Like Dante, when he stood with Beatrice
Beneath the flaming Lion's breast, and
saw

The seventh Crystal, and the Stair of Gold.

WASTED DAYS

(From a Picture Painted by Miss V. T.)

A fair slim boy not made for this world's pain,
With hair of gold thick clustering round his
ears,

And longing eyes half veiled by foolish tears
Like bluest water seen through mists of rain;
Pale cheeks whereon no kiss hath left its stain,
Red under-lip drawn in for fear of Love,
And white throat whiter than the breast of
dove—

Alas! alas! if all should be in vain.

Corn-fields behind, and reapers all a-row
In weariest labour, toiling wearily,
To no sweet sound of laughter, or of lute;
And careless of the crimson sunset-glow
The boy still dreams: nor knows that night
is nigh:
And in the night-time no man gathers fruit.

IMPRESSION DU MATIN

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold
Changed to a Harmony in grey:
A barge with ochre-coloured hay
Dropt from the wharf: and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down
The bridges, till the houses' walls
Seemed changed to shadows, and S. Paul's
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.

Then suddenly arose the clang
Of waking life: the streets were stirred
With country waggons: and a bird
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,
The daylight kissing her wan hair,
Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

THEOCRITUS

A Villanelle

O Singer of Persephone!
In the dim meadows desolate
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still through the ivy flits the bee
Where Amaryllis lies in state;
O singer of Persephone!

Simaetha calls on Hecate
And hears the wild dogs at the gate;
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still by the light and laughing sea
Poor Polypheme bemoans his fate:
O singer of Persephone!

And still in boyish rivalry
Young Daphnis challenges his mate:
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee,
For thee the jocund shepherds wait,
O singer of Persephone!
Dost thou remember Sicily?

THE GRAVE OF KEATS

Rid of the world's injustice, and his pain,
He rests at last beneath God's veil of blue:
Taken from life when life and love were new
The youngest of the martyrs here is lain,

Fair as Sebastian, and as early slain.
No cypress shades his grave, no funeral yew,
But gentle violets weeping with the dew
Weave on his bones an ever-blossoming chain.
O proudest heart that broke for misery!
O sweetest lips since those of Mitylene!
O poet-painter of our English Land!
Thy name was writ in water—it shall stand:
And tears like mine will keep thy memory
 green,
As Isabella did her Basil-tree.
Rome.

THE GRAVE OF SHELLEY

Like burnt-out torches by a sick man's bed
Gaunt cypress-trees stand round the sun-
 bleached stone;
Here doth the little night-owl make her
 throne,
And the slight lizard show his jewelled head.
And, where the chalice'd poppies flame to red,
In the still chamber of yon pyramid
Surely some Old-World Sphinx lurks darkly
 hid,
Grim warder of his pleasaunce of the dead.

Ah! sweet indeed to rest within the womb
Of Earth, great mother of eternal sleep,
But sweeter far for thee a restless tomb
In the blue cavern of an echoing deep,
Or where the tall ships founder in the gloom
Against the rocks of some wave-shattered
 steep.
Rome.

CAMMA

As one who poring on a Grecian urn
Scans the fair shapes some Attic hand hath
made,
God with slim goddess, goodly man with
maid,
And for their beauty's sake is loth to turn
And face the obvious day, must I not yearn
For many a secret moon of indolent bliss,
When in the midmost shrine of Artemis
I see thee standing, antique-limbed, and stern?

And yet—methinks I'd rather see thee play
That serpent of old Nile, whose witchery
Made Emperors drunken,—come, great Egypt,
shake
Our stage with all thy mimic pageants! Nay,
I am grown sick of unreal passions, make
The world thine Actium, me thine Antony!

THE DOLE OF THE KING'S DAUGHTER

(Breton)

Seven stars in the still water,
And seven in the sky;
Seven sins on the King's daughter,
Deep in her soul to lie.

Red roses are at her feet,
(Roses are red in her red-gold hair)
And O where her bosom and girdle meet
Red roses are hidden there.

Fair is the knight who lieth slain
Amid the rush and reed,
See the lean fishes that are fain
Upon dead men to feed.

Sweet is the page that lieth there,
(Cloth of gold is goodly prey,)
See the black ravens in the air
Black, O black as the night are they.

What do they there so stark and dead?
(There is blood upon her hand)
Why are the lilies flecked with red?
(There is blood on the river sand.)

There are two that ride from the south and
east,
And two from the north and west,
For the black raven a goodly feast,
For the King's daughter rest.

There is one man who loves her true,
(Red, O red, is the stain of gore!)
He hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew.
(One grave will do for four.)

No moon in the still heaven,
In the black water none,
The sins on her soul are seven.
The sin upon his is one

AMOR INTELLECTUALIS

Oft have we trod the vales of Castaly
And heard sweet notes of sylvan music blown
From antique reeds to common folk un-
known:

And often launched our bark upon that sea
Which the nine Muses hold in empery,
And ploughed free furrows through the wave
and foam
Nor spread reluctant sail for more safe home
Till we had freighted well our argosy.
Of which despoiled treasures these remain,
Sordello's passion, and the honied line
Of young Endymion, lordly Tamburlaine
Driving his pampered jades, and, more than
these,
The seven-fold vision of the Florentine,
And grave-browed Milton's solemn harmonies.

SANTA DECCA

The Gods are dead: no longer do we bring
To grey-eyed Pallas crowns of olive-leaves!
Demeter's child no more hath tithe of
sheaves,
And in the noon the careless shepherds sing,
For Pan is dead, and all the wantoning
By secret glade and devious haunt is o'er:
Young Hylas seeks the water-springs no
more;
Great Pan is dead, and Mary's Son is King.
And yet—perchance in this sea-tranced isle,
Chewing the bitter fruit of memory,
Some God lies hidden in the asphodel.
Ah Love! if such there be then it were well
For us to fly his anger: nay, but see
The leaves are stirring: let us watch a-while.
Corfu.

BY THE ARNO

The oleander on the wall
Grows crimson in the dawning light,
Though the grey shadows of the night
Lie yet on Florence like a pall.

The dew is bright upon the hill,
And bright the blossoms overhead,
But ah! the grasshoppers have fled,
The little Attic song is still.

Only the leaves are gently stirred
By the soft breathing of the gale,
And in the almond-scented vale
The lonely nightingale is heard.

The day will make thee silent soon,
O nightingale, sing on for love!
While yet upon the shadowy grove
Splinter the arrows of the moon.

Before, across the silent lawn
In sea-green vest the morning steals,
And to love's frightened eyes reveals
The long white fingers of the dawn

Fast climbing up the eastern sky
To grasp and slay the shuddering night,
All careless of my heart's delight,
Or if the nightingale should die.

IMPRESSION

Le Reveillon

The sky is laced with fitful red,
The circling mists and shadows flee,
The dawn is rising from the sea,
Like a white lady from her bed.

And jagged brazen arrows fall
Athwart the feathers of the night,
And a long wave of yellow light
Breaks silently on tower and hall,

And spreading wide across the wold
Wakes into flight some fluttering bird,
And all the chestnut tops are stirred,
And all the branches streaked with gold.

AT VERONA

How steep the stairs within Kings' houses are
For exile-wearied feet as mine to tread,
And O how salt and bitter is the bread
Which falls from this Hound's table,—better far
That I had died in the red ways of war,
Or that the gate of Florence bare my head,
Than to live thus, by all things comraded
Which seek the essence of my soul to mar.

“Curse God and die: what better hope than
this?

He hath forgotten thee in all the bliss
Of his gold city, and eternal day”—
Nay, peace: behind my prison's blinded bars
I do possess what none can take away,
My love, and all the glory of the stars.

SILENTIUM AMORI

As oftentimes the too resplendent sun
Hurries the pallid and reluctant moon
Back to her sombre cave, ere she hath won
A single ballad from the nightingale,
So doth thy Beauty make my lips to fail,
And all my sweetest singing out of tune.

And as at dawn across the level mead
On wings impetuous some wind will come,
And with its too harsh kisses break the reed
Which was its only instrument of song,
So my too stormy passions work me wrong,
And for excess of Love my Love is dumb.

But surely unto Thee mine eyes did show
Why I am silent, and my lute unstrung;
Else it were better we should part, and go,
Thou to some lips of sweeter melody,
And I to nurse the barren memory
Of unknissed kisses, and songs never sung.

HER VOICE

The wild bee reels from bough to bough
With his furry coat and his gauzy wing,
Now in a lily-cup, and now
Setting a jacinth bell a-swing,
In his wandering;
Sit closer love: it was here I trow
I made that vow,

Swore that two lives should be like one
As long as the sea-gull loved the sea,

As long as the sunflower sought the sun,—
It shall be, I said, for eternity
'Twixt you and me!
Dear friend, those times are over and done,
Love's web is spun.

Look upward where the poplar trees
Sway and sway in the summer air,
Here in the valley never a breeze
Scatters the thistledown, but there
Great winds blow fair
From the mighty murmuring mystical seas,
And the wave-lashed leas.

Look upward where the white gull screams
What does it see that we do not see?
Is that a star? or the lamp that gleams
On some outward voyaging argosy,—
Ah! can it be
We have lived our lives in a land of dreams!
How sad it seems.

Sweet, there is nothing left to say
But this, that love is never lost,
Keen winter stabs the breasts of May
Whose crimson roses burst his frost,
Ships tempest-tossed
Will find a harbour in some bay,
And so we may.

And there is nothing left to do
But to kiss once again, and part,
Nay, there is nothing we should rue,
I have my beauty,—you your Art,
Nay, do not start,
One world was not enough for two
Like me and you.

MY VOICE

Within this restless, hurried, modern world
We took our heart's full pleasure—You and I
And now the white sails of our ship are furled,
And spent the lading of our argosy.

Wherefore my cheeks before their time are
wan,
For very weeping is my gladness fled,
Sorrow has paled my young mouth's vermilion,
And Ruin draws the curtains of my bed.

But all this crowded life has been to thee
No more than lyre, or lute, or subtle spell
Of viols, or the music of the sea
That sleeps, a mimic echo, in the shell.

TO MY WIFE

With a Copy of My Poems
I can write no stately proem
As a prelude to my lay;
From a poet to a poem
I would dare to say.

For if of these fallen petals
One of you seem fair,
Love will waft it till it settles
On your hair.

And when wind and winter harden
All the loveless land,
It will whisper of the garden,
You will understand.

LOTUS LEAVES

There is no peace beneath the noon.

Ah! in those meadows is there peace
Where, girdled with a silver fleece,
As a bright shepherd, strays the moon?

Queen of the gardens of the sky,
Where stars like lilies, white and fair,
Shine through the mists of frosty air,
Oh, tarry, for the dawn is nigh!

Oh, tarry, for the envious day
Stretches long hands to catch thy feet.
Alas! but thou art over-fleet,
Alas! I know thou wilt not stay.

Up sprang the sun to run his race,
The breeze blew fair on meadow and lea;
But in the west I seemed to see
The likeness of a human face.

A linnet on the hawthorn spray
Sang of the glories of the spring,
And made the flow'ring copses ring
With gladness for the new-born day.

A lark from out the grass I trod
Flew wildly, and was lost to view
In the great seamless veil of blue
That hangs before the face of God.

The willow whispered overhead
That death is but a newer life,
And that with idle words of strife
We bring dishonour on the dead.

I took a branch from off the tree,
And hawthorn-blossoms drenched with dew,
I bound them with a sprig of yew,
And made a garland fair to see.

I laid the flowers where He lies,
(Warm leaves and flowers on the stone);
What joy I had to sit alone
Till evening broke on tired eyes:

Till all the shifting clouds had spun
A robe of gold for God to wear,
And into seas of purple air
Sank the bright galley of the sun.

.

Shall I be gladdened for the day,
And let my inner heart be stirred
By murmuring tree or song of bird,
And sorrow at the wild wind's play?

Not so: such idle dreams belong
To souls of lesser depth than mine;
I feel that I am half divine;
I know that I am great and strong.

I know that every forest tree
By labour rises from the root;
I know that none shall gather fruit
By sailing on the barren sea.

IMPRESSIONS

I

Le Jardin

The lily's withered chalice falls
Around its rod of dusty gold,
And from the beech-trees on the wold
The last wood-pigeon coos and calls.

The gaudy leonine sunflower
Hangs black and barren on its stalk,
And down the windy garden walk
The dead leaves scatter,—hour by hour.

Pale privet-petals white as milk
Are blown into a snowy mass:
The roses lie upon the grass
Like little shreds of crimson silk.

II

La Mer

A white mist drifts across the shrouds,
A wild moon in this wintry sky
Gleams like an angry lion's eye
Out of a mane of tawny clouds.

The muffled steersman at the wheel
Is but a shadow in the gloom;—
And in the throbbing engine room
Leap the long rods of polished steel.

The shattered storm has left its trace
Upon this huge and heaving dome,
For the thin threads of yellow foam
Float on the waves like ravelled lace.

UNDER THE BALCONY

O beautiful star with the crimson mouth!

O moon with the brows of gold!

Rise up, rise up, from the odorous south!

And light for my love her way,

Lest her little feet should stray

On the windy hill and the wold!

O beautiful star with the crimson mouth!

O moon with the brows of gold!

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!

O ship with the wet, white sail!

Put in, put in, to the port to me!

For my love and I would go

To the land where the daffodils blow

In the heart of a violet dale!

O ship that shakes on the desolate sea!

O ship with the wet, white sail!

O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!

O bird that sings on the spray!

Sing on, sing on, from your soft brown throat!

And my love in her little bed

Will listen, and lift her head

From the pillow, and come my way!

O rapturous bird with the low, sweet note!

O bird that sits on the spray!

O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!

O blossom with lips of snow!

Come down, come down, for my love to wear!

You will die on her head in a crown,

You will die in a fold of her gown,

To her little light heart you will go!

O blossom that hangs in the tremulous air!

O blossom with lips of snow!

LE JARDIN DES TUILERIES

This winter air is keen and cold,
And keen and cold this winter sun,
But round my chair the children run
Like little things of dancing gold.

Sometimes about the painted kiosk
The mimic soldiers strut and stride,
Sometimes the blue-eyed brigands hide
In the bleak tangles of the bosk.

And sometimes, while the old nurse cons,
Her book, they steal across the square,
And launch their paper navies where
Huge Triton writhes in greenish bronze.

And now in mimic flight they flee,
And now they rush, a boisterous band—
And, tiny hand on tiny hand,
Climb up the black and leafless tree.

Ah! cruel tree! if I were you,
And children climbed me, for their sake
Though it be winter I would break
Into spring blossoms white and blue!

DECORATIVE PHANTASIES

I

LE PANNEAU

Under the rose-tree's dancing shade
There stands a little ivory girl,
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl
With pale green nails of polished jade.

The red leaves fall upon the mould,
The white leaves flutter, one by one,
Down to a blue bowl where the sun,
Like a great dragon, writhes in gold.

The white leaves float upon the air,
The red leaves flutter idly down,
Some fall upon her yellow gown,
And some upon her raven hair.

She takes an amber lute and sings,
And as she sings a silver crane
Begins his scarlet neck to strain,
And flap his burnished metal wings.

She takes a lute of amber bright,
And from the thicket where he lies
Her lover, with his almond eyes,
Watches her movement in delight.

And now she gives a cry of fear,
And tiny tears begin to start:
A thorn has wounded with its dart
The pink-veined sea-shell of her ear.

And now she laughs a merry note:
There has fallen a petal of the rose
Just where the yellow satin shows
The blue-veined flower of her throat.

With pale green nails of polished jade,
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl,
There stands a little ivory girl
Under the rose-tree's dancing shade.

CANZONET

I have no store
Of gryphon-guarded gold;
Now, as before,
Bare is the shepherd's fold.
Rubies, nor pearls,
Have I to gem thy throat;
Yet woodland girls
Have loved the shepherd's note.

Then, pluck a reed
And bid me sing to thee,
For I would feed
Thine ears with melody,
Who art more fair
Than fairest fleur-de-lys,
More sweet and rare
Than sweetest ambergris.

What dost thou fear?
Young Hyacinth is slain,
Pan is not here,
And will not come again.
No horned Faun
Treads down the yellow leas,
No God at dawn
Steals through the olive trees.

Hylas is dead,
Nor will he e'er divine
Those little red
Rose-petalled lips of thine.
On the high hill
No ivory dryads play,
Silver and still
Sinks the sad autumn day.

SYMPHONY IN YELLOW

An omnibus across the bridge
Crawls like a yellow butterfly,
And, here and there, a passer-by
Shows like a little restless midge.

Big barges full of yellow hay
Are moved against the shadowy wharf,
And, like a yellow silken scarf,
The thick fog hangs along the quay.

The yellow leaves begin to fade
And flutter from the Temple elms,
And at my feet the pale green Thames
Lies like a rod of rippled jade.

IN THE FOREST

Out of the mid-wood's twilight
Into the meadow's dawn,
Ivory limbed and brown-eyed,
Flashes my Faun!

He skips through the copses singing,
And his shadow dances along,
And I know not which I should follow,
Shadow or song!

O Hunter, snare me his shadow!
O Nightingale, catch me his strain!
Else moonstruck with music and madness
I track him in vain!

TAEDIUM VITAE

To stab my youth with desperate knives, to
wear

This paltry age's gaudy livery,
To let each base hand filch my treasury,
To mesh my soul within a woman's hair,
And be mere Fortune's lackeyed groom,—I
swear

I love it not! these things are less to me
Than the thin foam that frets upon the sea,
Less than the thistle-down of summer air

Which hath no seed: better to stand aloof
Far from these slanderous fools who mock my
life

Knowing me not, better the lowliest roof
Fit for the meanest hind to sojourn in,
Than to go back to that hoarse cave of strife
Where my white soul first kissed the mouth
of sin.

THE NEW REMORSE

The sin was mine; I did not understand.

So now is music prisoned in her cave,
Save where some ebbing desultory wave
Frets with its restless whirls this meagre
strand.

And in the withered hollow of this land

Hath summer dug herself so deep a grave,
That hardly can the leaden willow crave
One silver blossom from keen winter's hand.
But who is this who cometh by the shore?

(Nay, love, look up and wonder!) Who is this
Who cometh in dyed garments from the
South?

It is thy new-found Lord, and he shall kiss
The yet unravished roses of thy mouth,
And I shall weep and worship, as before.

THE SPHINX

In a dim corner of my room for longer than
my fancy thinks
A beautiful and silent Sphinx has watched me
through the shifting gloom.

Inviolatè and immobìle she does not rise, she
does not stir
For silver moons are naught to her and naught
to her the suns that reel.

Red follows grey across the air, the waves of
moonlight ebb and flow
But with the Dawn she does not go and in the
night-time she is there.

Dawn follows Dawn and Nights grow old and
all the while this curious cat
Lies couching on the Chinese mat with eyes
of satin rimmed with gold.

Upon the mat she lies and leers and on the
tawny throat of her
Flutters the soft and silky fur or ripples to her
pointed ears.

Come forth my lovely seneschal! so somnolent,
so statuesque!
Come forth you exquisite grotesque! half wom
an and half animal!

Come forth my lovely languorous Sphinx! and
put your head upon my knee!
And let me stroke your throat and see your
body spotted like the Lynx!

And let me touch those curving claws of yellow ivory and grasp
The tail that like a monstrous Asp coils round
your heavy velvet paws!

* * *

A thousand weary centuries are thine while
I have hardly seen
Some twenty summers cast their green for
Autumn's gaudy liveries.

But you can read the Hieroglyphs on the great
sandstone obelisks,
And you have talked with Basilisks, and you
have looked on Hippogriffs.

O tell me, were you standing by when Isis
to Osiris knelt?
And did you watch the Egyptian melt her union
for Antony

And drink the jewel-drunken wine and bend
her head in mimic awe
To see the huge proconsul draw the salted tunny
from the brine?

And did you mark the Cyprian kiss white Adon
on his catafalque?
And did you follow Amenalk, the god of Heliopolis?

And did you talk with Thoth, and did you hear
the moon-horned Io weep?
And know the painted kings who sleep beneath
the wedge-shaped pyramid?

* * *

Lift up your large black satin eyes which are
like cushions where one sinks!
Fawn at my feet fantastic Sphinx! and sing
me all your memories!

Sing to me of the Jewish maid who wandered
with the Holy Child,
And how you led them through the wild, and
how they slept beneath your shade.

Sing to me of that odorous green eve when
couching by the marge
You heard from Adrian's gilded barge the
laughter of Antinous

And lapped the stream and fed your drouth and
watched with hot and hungry stare
The ivory body of that rare young slave with
his pomegranate mouth!

Sing to me of the Labyrinth in which the twy-
formed bull was stalled!
Sing to me of the night you crawled across the
temple's granite plinth

When through the purple corridors the scream-
ing scarlet Ibis flew
In terror, and a horrid dew dripped from the
moaning Mandragoras,

And the great torpid crocodile within the tank
shed slimy tears,

And tare the jewels from his ears and staggered
back into the Nile,

And the priests cursed you with shrill psalms
as in your claws you seized their snake

And crept away with it to slake your passion
by the shuddering palms.

* * *

Who were your lovers? who were they who
wrestled for you in the dust?

Which was the vessel of your Lust? What
Leman had you, every day?

Did giant Lizards come and crouch before you
on the reedy banks?

Did Gryphons with great metal flanks leap on
you in your trampled couch?

Did monstrous hippopotami come sidling to-
ward you in the mist?

Did gilt-scaled dragons writhe and twist with
passion as you passed them by?

And from the brick-built Lycian tomb what
horrible Chimaera came

With fearful heads and fearful flame to breed
new wonders from your womb?

* * *

Or had you shameful secret quests and did
you harry to your home

Some Nereid coiled in amber foam with curi-
ous rock crystal breasts?

Or did you treading through the froth call to
the brown Sidonian
For tidings of Leviathan, Leviathan or Behe-
moth?

Or did you when the sun was set climb up the
cactus-covered slope
To meet your swarthy Ethiop whose body was
of polished jet?

Or did you while the earthen skiffs dropped
down the grey Nilotic flats
At twilight and the flickering bats flew round
the temple's triple glyphs

Steal to the border of the bar and swim across
the silent lake
And slink into the vault and make the Pyra-
mid your lupanar

Till from each black sarcophagus rose up the
painted swathed dead?
Or did you lure unto your bed the ivory-horned
Tragelaphos?

Or did you love the god of flies who plagued
the Hebrews and was splashed
With wine unto the waist? or Pasht, who had
green beryls for her eyes?

Or that young god, the Tyrian, who was more
amorous than the dove
Of Ashtaroth? or did you love the god of the
Assyrian

Whose wings, like strange transparent talc,
rose high above his hawk-faced head,
Painted with silver and with red and ribbed
with rods of Oreichalch?

Or did huge Apis from his car leap down and
lay before your feet
Big blossoms of the honey-sweet and honey-
coloured nenuphar?

* * *

How subtle-secret is your smile! Did you love
none then? Nay, I know
Great Ammon was your bedfellow! He lay with
you beside the Nile!

The river-horses in the slime trumpeted when
they saw him come
Odorous with Syrian galbanum and smeared
with spikenard and with thyme.

He came along the river-bank like some tall
galley argent-sailed,
He strode across the waters, mailed in beauty,
and the waters sank.

He strode across the desert sand: he reached
the valley where you lay:
He waited till the dawn of day; then touched
your black breasts with his hand.

You kissed his mouth with mouths of flame:
you made the horned god your own:
You stood behind him on his throne: you called
him by his secret name.

You whispered monstrous oracles into the caverns of his ears:

With blood of goats and blood of steers you taught him monstrous miracles.

White Ammon was your bedfellow! Your chamber was the steaming Nile!

And with your curved archaic smile you watched his passion come and go.

* * *

With Syrian oils his brows were bright: and widespread as a tent at noon

His marble limbs made pale the moon and lent the day a larger light.

His long hair was nine cubits' span and coloured like that yellow gem

Which hidden in their garment's hem the merchants bring from Kurdistan.

His face was as the must that lies upon a vat of new-made wine:

The seas cou'd not insapphirine the perfect azure of his eyes.

His thick soft throat was white as milk and threaded with thin veins of blue:

And curious pearls like frozen dew were broidered on his flowing silk.

* * *

On pearl and porphyry pedestalled he was too bright to look upon:

For on his ivory breast there shone the wondrous ocean-emerald,

That mystic moonlit jewel which some diver of
the Colchian caves
Had found beneath the blackening waves and
carried to the Colchian witch.

Before his gilded galiot ran naked vine-
wreathed corybants,
And lines of swaying elephants knelt down to
draw his chariot,

And lines of swarthy Nubians bare up his litter
as he rode
Down the great granite-paven road between the
nodding peacock-fans.

The merchants brought him steatite from Sidon
in their painted ships:
The meanest cup that touched his lips was
fashioned from a chrysolite.

The merchants brought him cedar-chests of
rich apparel bound with cords:
His train was borne by Memphian lords: young
kings were glad to be his guests.

Ten hundred shaven priests did bow to Am-
mon's altar day and night,
Ten hundred lamps did wave their light
through Ammon's carven house—and now

Foul snake and speckled adder with their
young ones crawl from stone to stone
For ruined is the house and prone the great
rose-marble monolith!

Wild ass or trotting jackal comes and couches
in the mouldering gates:

Wild satyrs call unto their mates across the
fallen fluted drums.

And on the summit of the pile the blue-faced
ape of Horus sits

And gibbers while the figtree splits the pillars
of the peristyle,

* * *

The god is scattered here and there: deep hid-
den in the windy sand

I saw his giant granite hand still clenched in
impotent despair.

And many a wandering caravan of stately
negroes silken-shawled,

Crossing the desert, halts appalled before the
neck that none can span.

And many a bearded Bedouin draws back his
yellow-striped burnous

To gaze upon the Titan thews of him who was
thy paladin.

* * *

Go, seek his fragments on the moor and wash
them in the evening dew,

And from their pieces make anew thy mutilated
paramour!

Go, seek them where they lie alone and from
their broken pieces make

Thy bruised bedfellow! And wake mad passions
in the senseless stone!

Charm his dull ear with Syrian hymns! he
loved your body! oh, be kind,
Pour spikenard on his hair, and wind soft rolls
of linen round his limbs!

Wind round his head the figured coins! stain
with red fruits those pallid lips!
Weave purple for his shrunken hips! and
purple for his barren loins!

* * *

Away to Egypt! have no fear. Only one God
has ever died.
Only one God has let His side be wounded by
a soldier's spear.

But these, thy lovers, are not dead. Still by
the hundred-cubit gate
Dog-faced Anubis sits in state with lotus-lilies
for thy head.

Still from his chair of porphyry gaunt Memnon
strains his lidless eyes
Across the empty land, and cries each yellow
morning unto thee.

And Nilus with his broken horn lies in his
black and oozy bed
And till thy coming will not spread his waters
on the withering corn.

Your lovers are not dead, I know. They will
rise up and hear your voice
And clash their cymbals and rejoice and run
to kiss your mouth! And so,

Set wings upon your argosies! Set horses to
your ebon car!
Back to your Nile! Or if you are grown sick of
dead divinities

Follow some roving lion's spoor across the cop-
per-coloured plain,
Reach out and hale him by the mane and bid
him be your paramour!

Couch by his side upon the grass and set your
white teeth in his throat
And when you hear his dying note lash your
long flanks of polished brass

And take a tiger for your mate, whose amber
sides are flecked with black,
And ride upon his gilded back in triumph
through the Theban gate.

And toy with him in amorous jest, and when
he turns, and snarls, and gnaws,
O smite him with your jasper claws! and
bruise him with your agate breasts!

* * *

Why are you tarrying? Get hence! I weary of
your sullen ways,
I weary of your steadfast gaze, your somnolent
magnificence.

Your horrible and heavy breath makes the light
flicker in the lamp,
And on my brow I feel the damp and dreadful
dews of night and death.

Your eyes are like fantastic moons that shiver
in some stagnant lake,
Your tongue is like a scarlet snake that dances
to fantastic tunes,

Your pulse makes poisonous melodies, and your
black throat is like the hole
Left by some torch or burning coal on Sarace-
nic tapestries.

Away! The sulphur-coloured stars are hurrying
through the Western gate!
Away! Or it may be too late to climb their
silent silver cars!

See, the dawn shivers round the grey gilt-
dialled towers, and the rain
Streams down each diamonded pane and blurs
with tears the wannish day.

What snake-tressed fury fresh from Hell, with
uncouth gestures and unclean,
Stole from the poppy-drowsy queen and led you
to a student's cell?

* * *

What songless tongueless ghost of sin crept
through the curtains of the night,
And saw my taper burning bright, and knocked,
and bade you enter in.

Are there not others more accursed, whiter
with leprosies than I?
Are Abana and Pharpar dry that you come here
to slake your thirst?

Get hence, you loathsome mystery! Hideous
animal, get hence!

You wake in me each bestial sense, you make
me what I would not be.

You make my creed a barren sham, you wake
foul dreams of sensual life,
And Atys with his blood-stained knife were
better than the thing I am.

False Sphinx! False Sphinx! By reedy Styx
old Charon, leaning on his oar,
Waits for my coin. Go thou before, and leave
me to my crucifix,

Whose pallid burden, sick with pain, watches
the world with wearied eyes,
And weeps for every soul that dies, and weeps
for every soul in vain.

* * *

TO MILTON

Milton! I think thy spirit hath passed away
From these white cliffs, and high-embattled
towers;

This gorgeous fiery-coloured world of ours
Seems fallen into ashes dull and grey,
And the age changed unto a mimic play
Wherein we waste our else too-crowded
hours:

For all our pomp and pageantry and powers
We are but fit to delve the common clay,
Seeing this little isle on which we stand,
This England, this sea-lion of the sea.

By ignorant demagogues is held in fee,
Who love her not: Dear God! is this the land
Which bare a triple empire in her hand
When Cromwell spake the word Democracy!

LOUIS NAPOLEON

Eagle of Austerlitz! where were thy wings
When far away upon a barbarous strand,
In fight unequal, by an obscure hand,
Fell the last scion of thy brood of kings!

Poor boy! thou shalt not flaunt thy cloak of
red,
Or ride in state through Paris in the van
Of thy returning legions, but instead
Thy mother France, free and republican,

Shall on thy dead and crownless forehead place
The better laurels of a soldier's crown,
That not dishonoured should thy soul go
down
To tell the mighty Sire of thy race

That France hath kissed the mouth of Liberty,
And found it sweeter than his honied bees,
And that the giant wave Democracy
Breaks on the shores where Kings lay couched
at ease.

QUANTUM MUTATA

There was a time in Europe long ago
When no man died for freedom anywhere,
But England's lion leaping from its lair
Laid hands on the oppressor! it was so
While England could a great Republic show.

Witness the men of Piedmont, chiefest care
Of Cromwell, when with impotent despair
The Pontiff in his painted portico

Trembled before our stern ambassadors.
How comes it then that from such high estate
We have thus fallen, save that Luxury
With barren merchandise piles up the gate
Where noble thoughts and deeds should enter
by:

Else might we still be Milton's heritors.

SONNET

On the Massacre of the Christians in Bulgaria

Christ, dost thou live indeed? or are thy bones
Still straitened in their rock-hewn sepulchre?
And was thy Rising only dreamed by Her
Whose love of thee for all her sin atones?
For here the air is horrid with men's groans,
The priests who call upon thy name are slain,
Dost thou not hear the bitter wail of pain
From those whose children lie upon the stones?
Come down, O Son of God! incestuous gloom
Curtains the land, and through the starless
night

Over thy Cross a Crescent moon I see!
If thou in very truth didst burst the tomb
Come down, O Son of Man! and show thy
might,
Lest Mahomet be crowned instead of Thee!

LIBERTATIS SACRA FAMES

Albeit nurtured in democracy,
And liking best that state republican
Where every man is Kinglike and no man

Is crowned above his fellows, yet I see,
Spite of this modern fret for Liberty,
Better the rule of One, whom all obey,
Than to let clamorous demagogues betray
Our freedom with the kiss of anarchy.
Wherefore I love them not whose hands profane
Plant the red flag upon the piled-up street
For no right cause, beneath whose ignorant reign
Arts, Culture, Reverence, Honour, all things
fade,
Save treason and the dagger of her trade,
Or Murder with his silent bloody feet.

AVE MARIA GRATIO PLENA

Was this His coming! I had hoped to see
A scene of wondrous glory, as was told
Of some great God who in a rain of gold
Broke open bars and fell on Danae:
Or a dread vision as when Semele
Sickening for love and unappeased desire
Prayed to see God's clear body, and the fire
Caught her brown limbs and slew her utterly:
With such glad dreams I sought this holy place,
And now with wondering eyes and heart I
stand
Before this supreme mystery of Love:
Some kneeling girl with passionless pale face,
An angel with a lily in his hand,
And over both the white wings of a Dove.
Florence.

